

# DOUBLED PREFIXES

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Herman Melville's Moby Dick is prefaced by a section entitled Extracts, consisting of eighty quotations about whales and the author's acknowledgement of the efforts of a Sub-Sub-Librarian, referred to subsequently as a "poor devil of a Sub-Sub". Despite the impeccable credentials of this source, neither word appears in Webster's Second or Third. (In fact, these dictionaries do not recognize any words beginning with this doubled prefix.)

However, other doubled prefixes can be found in dictionaries, and it is the purpose of this short note to exhibit some of these. In what follows, I exclude words such as REREAD that begin tautonymically, but not with identical true prefixes.

Several doubled prefixes are numerical in nature. Webster's Second and Third reveal DIDIPLOID, MICROMICROFARAD, MICROMICRON, PICOPICOGRAM and UNIUNIVALENT. In the chemical word TRITRIACONTANE, the first prefix means three, but the second is part of a root meaning thirty.

Medical dictionaries by Stedman and Dorland contain surgical terms describing operations in which like tubular organs are sewn together in such a way as to produce an opening (a stoma) between them. These openings may occur in blood vessels, yielding PHLEOBPHLEBOSTOMY and VENOVENOSTOMY, in the urinary system, yielding URETERO-URETEROSTOMY, or the gastro-intestinal tract, yielding ESOPHAGO-ESOPHAGOSTOMY, GASTROGASTROSTOMY, ENTEROENTEROSTOMY, DUODENODUODENOSTOMY, ILEOILEOSTOMY, COLOCOLOSTOMY, and that remarkable four-J word JEJUNOJEJUNOSTOMY. Biology also provides ANTIANTIBODY, ANTIANTIDOTE, ANTIANTI-ENZYME and ANTIANTITOXIN.

The field of medicine includes several remarkable names often cited in medical literature but not necessarily found in medical dictionaries. Insufficient production of the hormone of the parathyroid glands is termed hypoparathyroidism. When a group of patients were discovered who possessed the chemical disorders expected for hypoparathyroidism but with a normal amount of parathyroid hormone in their blood, the disease pseudohypoparathyroidism, abbreviated PHP, was named. Finally, some individuals were found who had the physical characteristics of patients with PHP, but nothing chemically abnormal; these were deemed to have PSEUDO-PSEUDOHYPOPARATHYROIDISM, abbreviated PPHP. The term PSEUDO-PSEUDOLYMPHOMA has a similar

story behind it.

It should be mentioned that when amino acids are linked together in organic chemistry, the names of the resulting peptides consist of the amino acids in adjectival order of linkage. Hence, a tripeptide may be named GLYCYLGLYCYLGLYCINE and peptide names may account for numberless multiple prefix words.

Literary doubled prefixes (as contrasted with technical ones discussed so far) are somewhat rarer. An endless number of multiple prefix words can be derived from the formula GREAT-GREAT- ... -GRANDFATHER (or -MOTHER, -CHILD, etc.). If hyphenation is deemed unfair for such a list, it would appear that only patience is needed; doubled prefix words tend to appear hyphenated in Webster's Second and solid in Webster's Third.

We note in passing PHILOPHILOSOPHOS, PREPREFERENCE and PREPREPARATION, but the undoubted champion of literary doubled prefixes is RE-RE-. (Perhaps this reflects the human tendency to try and try again.) Webster's Third lists only RERECORD, and Webster's Second lists RE-RECORD and RE-REJOINER above the line, but there are no less than ninety authentic RE-RE- words below the line from the comfortable RE-RECITAL to the technical RE-REPLEVIN. (Hidden among these are words prefixed by the tautonymic RERE- such as rerebrace, rere-county, reredos and reresupper; are there any others?)

Special mention should be made of some near misses -- words beginning with a doubled prefix in which the two spellings are different, or which are synonyms: PARAPARESIS, and the musical terms DEMISEMITONE, DEMISEMIQUAVER and HEMIDEMISEMIQUAVER.

What about doubled suffixes? Although there are many English words with terminal tautonyms (such as SINGING), I was unable to find any doubled suffixes. The Entertainment section of the New York Times of February 19, 1978 shows a photograph of the staging of Gershwin's musical "Let 'Em Eat Cake", in which a man holds a placard reading DOWN WITH ISMISM. That is the closest I can come.